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# Commission News

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An Update to the Commissioners of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission

**Full Commission Meeting September 15,  
Slatersville, RI**

## CONGRESSMAN MCGOVERN FILES BLACKSTONE REAUTHORIZATION BILL IN HOUSE

Support for Commission reauthorization by our Congressional delegation has just taken another step forward. On September 14 Congressman Jim McGovern filed a bill to reauthorize the Commission for another ten years. The bill, which is co-sponsored by Congressmen Neal, Kennedy, and Langevin, is a companion to Senate Bill 1387, introduced in July by Senator Lincoln Chafee with the support of the entire Senate delegation from Massachusetts and Rhode Island. STAFF CONTACT – LARRY GALL.

## THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY RECEIVES \$22.9 MILLION IN EARMARK PROJECTS

The Blackstone Valley's Congressional Delegation has secured \$22.9m for the Blackstone River Bikeway, the Northern Gateway Visitor Center, and other transportation-related enhancements. Of these funds, \$10.9m are slated for the Bikeway and transportation enhancements in Rhode Island, and \$12m are slated for the Bikeway and Visitor Center in Massachusetts.

The Delegation has also secured \$800,000 for the Commission's operating expenses, a decrease of \$50,000 from FY 2005, and \$500,000 for development projects for fiscal year 2006.

Many thanks to our Delegation for their hard work in providing these funds that are so vital to making the Blackstone Valley a vibrant and healthy community. STAFF CONTACT - LIZ MCCONNELL.

## REFLECTING ON THE PAST, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Sustainability Study Report conducted by the NPS Conservation Study Institute on behalf of the Commission is

complete and is available. The report examines four aspects of the Commission's work:

1. Its accomplishments and progress in achieving the strategies and goals set forth in the Cultural Heritage Land Management Plan, as amended;
2. The federal investment and what that investment has leveraged;
3. What further actions are needed to protect, enhance and interpret the Corridor, and;
4. An evaluation of the management structure, and alternative options for the future.

The report is comprehensive and impressive in both its scope and investigation into how the network of partnerships have developed over time, and the impact of those partnerships on the landscape of the Blackstone Valley.

We are sincerely grateful to the Conservation Study Institute and the many, many partners, friends and colleagues who participated in the workshops, meetings and surveys, and contributed to the development of this valuable report. STAFF CONTACT - LIZ MCCONNELL.

## CANAL PRESERVATION STUDY



Although in operation for only twenty years, the Blackstone Canal left an indelible mark on the landscape of the Blackstone Valley. Beginning in 1828, the canal provided a navigable waterway between Providence and central Massachusetts, significantly increasing the movement of goods and people throughout the region. Much of the canal infrastructure was dismantled after the construction of the railroad, which became the primary means of transportation, in the 1840s. Local mill owners, however, converted the canal trench into power canals, encouraging the expansion of the industrial revolution in the Valley. Hundreds of resources associated with the canal and its subsequent industrial use survive, either in whole or part, throughout the Valley.

In partnership with the Worcester Historical Museum, the Corridor Commission funded a Canal Preservation Study to inventory and map historic canal-related resources in Massachusetts, document the condition of those resources, and make recommendations for their preservation and interpretation. Five segments of the canal were identified as key areas for immediate action, based on their condition, rarity, level of protection, potential for public access and opportunities for restoration and interpretation. These include the Millville Lock Area in Millville, the Skull Rock Area in Uxbridge, the Plummer's Landing-Riverdale Mill Area in Northbridge, the Fisherville Area in Grafton and the Cross Road-Grafton Street Area in Millbury. The Study represents an important first step in addressing the preservation of the Canal, which was included among Preservation Mass' Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources in 2003, and provides a plan for moving forward. This fall, Corridor staff will hold public meetings in each of the Canal communities to discuss the Study's findings. As communities look to implement the Study's recommendations, there will be additional partnership opportunities for the Corridor Commission.

STAFF CONTACT – CHUCK ARNING / JOANNA DOHERTY

## NORTHERN GATEWAY RECEIVES FUNDING

The exciting news of \$6.4 million in federal transportation funding for this project was announced in August thanks to the committed efforts of Congressman McGovern. Partnership development and conceptual design work continues on the Visitor Center. The boards of the Worcester Historical Museum and the Worcester County/Central Massachusetts Convention and Visitors Bureau will be voting on formalizing their partnership with the project this month. The City of Worcester, Corridor Commission, WHM, and CVB have recently met to discuss the next steps toward completing this regional visitor center. STAFF CONTACT – SUE ANDREWS.

## HASSANAMESITT WOODS

With assistance from the Trust for Public Land, the Grafton Land Trust, the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and other partners, the Town of Grafton took ownership of Hassanamesitt Woods, a 200-acre wooded landscape long associated with a 17th-century praying Indian village, one year ago. An intensive archaeological survey, funded in part by Corridor Commission grants, has since been completed by the Center for Cultural and Environmental History at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Although the investigation did not reveal definitive evidence of the praying Indian village, seven sites were located, providing significant information about the landscape's historical development and use. These include a prehistoric stone quarry, two 19th-century cellar holes and a domestic site that was home to Peter Muckamaug, a member of the Nipmuc nation, and his descendants from the 18th century

through the late 1900s. Other parts of the property were parceled out to white settlers, who established farmsteads and orchards. According to the archaeological report, Hassanamesitt Woods "offers an excellent opportunity to present to the public a landscape that has been utilized by two cultural groups" for farming, hunting, quarrying and residence for centuries.

The remaining Corridor Commission funds will be used to complete a Preservation Master Plan for the site, which will inventory the landscape's natural and cultural resources. This data, coupled with information on the historic development of the property, will form the basis for specific recommendations regarding landscape management, interpretation and site improvements, including the preservation and/or rehabilitation of features with historical, ecological or educational significance. The Plan will balance public access with the protection of the site's resources and provide a "road map" for future decision-making. The Hassanamesitt Woods Management Committee is seeking additional funding for the Plan from the Grafton Community Preservation Committee. STAFF CONTACT – CHUCK ARNING / JOANNA DOHERTY

## EXPEDITION 2005



Expedition 2005 was a huge success drawing partners and river lovers all over the Blackstone River Corridor. The word is out that the River is getting better and is a resource to enjoy for recreation as well as spur economic development. The event also provides the opportunity to look at the future's challenges with open eyes. A series of community meetings and events were undertaken along the route. These included a Polish Festival, a community dinner, and a Celtic music concert. The event also highlighted all of the work left to accomplish. Many thanks to Sue Andrews and the Expedition team for all of their hard work in making this event a success. For more information, photographs of the event or if you just want to visit [blackstoneexpedition05.com](http://blackstoneexpedition05.com). STAFF CONTACT – SUE ANDREWS.

## RIVERWAYS

## Mark Your Calendars for the Greenway



### Challenge

*Billington, Moszczinski and Maas at the Finish Line*

September 24, 2005 will commemorate the Fifth Running of the Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge. Beginning this year at the Common in Grafton, MA, the 54 mile course will be a linear course, with 7 transition sites and the finish line at the Meadow at the Kelly House in Lincoln, RI. There are 69 teams registered with representation from 8 countries, 5 continents, 6 states who will be visiting 2 states and 11 Towns & Cities in the Blackstone Valley. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission is the major sponsor of the event along with Unibank, Citadel Communications, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Whitin Community Center and RI DEM as River Champion Sponsors. The Challenge begins at 9:00am with the participants running 3.5 miles, the Finish Line celebrations will begin at the Kelly House meadow at noon, the Award Ceremonies will begin at 3:00pm. Please stop by and visit, enjoy the fun and take the Challenge! Check our website at [www.GreenwayChallenge.org](http://www.GreenwayChallenge.org) for more details.

STAFF CONTACT – BARBARA DIXON.

## BLACKSTONE RIVER BIKEWAY

Grand Opening of Bikeway in Massachusetts

On June 20, 2005 Congressmen James McGovern and Richard Neal along with the Executive Office of Transportation,



Massachusetts Highway Department and other state and local elected officials, held a Grand Opening celebration for the first 2.5 miles of the Blackstone River Bikeway in MA. The segment extends from Rt. 122A/Main St. in Millbury to the newly constructed Millbury St. in Worcester. The Massachusetts

Highway Department plans on beginning design on the Millbury, Sutton, Grafton segments in January 2006. The Uxbridge/Millville segment remains at 25% design with an anticipated public hearing date of March 2006.

Funding for the remaining portions of the Bikeway was secured by the Blackstone Valley Congressional delegation via the federal transportation bill SAFETEA-LU (Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Equity Act- A Legacy for Users). A total of \$15.6M in High Priority Project funding was authorized in the legislation signed by President Bush on August 10, 2005.

Other Blackstone Valley transportation projects that received funding in the bill include:

- RI- \$900,000 for transportation enhancements
- RI- \$11M Woonasquatucket River Greenway/Northwest Bike Trail
- RI- \$10M Blackstone River Bikeway
- RI- \$3.0M Ten Mile River Greenway
- RI- \$4.4M Rehab of Bridge #550 in Pawtucket
- RI- \$1.6M Replace I-195 Washington Bridge
- Eastbound
- RI- \$2.5M Bury Power Lines at India Point
- RI- \$5.0M Rehab of Stillwater Viaduct in Smithfield
- RI- \$5.0M Rt. 146 Safety Improvements in North Smithfield
- MA- \$2.6M Reconfigure Kilby/Hammond area road network
- MA- \$0.9M Reconstruct Goddard Memorial Drive
- MA- \$5.6M Blackstone River Bikeway/Worcester
- Common Pavillion
- MA- \$6.4M Northern Gateway Visitor Center
- MA- \$6.5M Design/Construct streetscape improvements downtown Worcester

## BVI

### Leadership Blackstone Valley

The 2005/2006 Class of Leadership Blackstone Valley is kicking off on October 20<sup>th</sup> with a "Meet the Partners" retreat. Coordinator Beckley Alley of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is expecting up to 20 participants. Class members will take part in sessions like the "Changing Face of" or "Preserving the Natural Resources of the Blackstone Valley". The class will get the opportunity to learn about various aspects of preservation, the environment and culture. They will also get to rub elbows with LBV alumni. Over the course of the class, participants will get to meet up to 50 local and state decision makers. Other highlights will include a new session on Transportation in the Valley. This will give the class the opportunity to learn about the bikeway and how transportation has an impact on the growth of the valley. Commissioners are welcome to nominate candidates and also to attend as observers. Registration is still open until September 30 and scholarships are still available. Please contact Beckley Alley at the Blackstone



Valley Chamber at 508.234.9090. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH.

## TOURISM

### Tourism Collaborative Expands Regional Corridor Messaging

The Tourism Collaborative has partnered with the Essex, Quinebaug and Shetucket on a collaborative New England Heritage Corridor ad for the Massachusetts Getaway Guide for 06.

### Measuring Travel and Tourism

As a part of Campaign V, the tourism collaborative is working with the Travel Industry of America on gathering information on travel and tourism in the Blackstone Valley. Historically the collaborative has relied on multiple sources for this information and the Travel Industry of America's TEIM model will provide a much needed baseline for travel and tourism in the Blackstone Valley. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH AND BARBARA DIXON.

### Footsteps in History



*Evans School Chepachet, RI*

Footsteps in History is Coming Columbus Day Weekend! The Tourism Collaborative has been working with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to affiliate the program to Preserve America. On receiving a positive response from the Advisory Council, the Collaborative renamed the event to "Blackstone Valley Footsteps in History Preserve America Weekend." The Tourism Collaborative secured the services of Veronica Cadoppi who has been working through the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council on developing the program. After spending much of the spring and summer planning and soliciting sites, over 130 sites and events all over the Valley will be participating in the Footsteps in History weekend. The collaborative has also been working with public relations consultant, Lisa Mosczinski to secure as much media exposure for the event as possible.

Some other highlights include Ranger Dan Wegner who will be walking the Corridor from Worcester to Providence and visiting communities along the way as a promotion for the event.

In addition to the weekend open house the Tourism Collaborative shall be hosting Preserve America Staff at a

reception and workshop to precede the Footsteps weekend. A tentative schedule is as follows:

September 28 – October 4 – Ranger Dan Wegner's walk of the Blackstone Valley.

Weekend of September 30 – Miscellaneous Heritage Homecoming Events.

October 3 – 6 pm to 7:30 – Massachusetts Communities Welcoming reception (preceded by a tour of the valley for Preserve America officials).

October 4 – Blackstone River Valley Cultural and Heritage Tourism Summit – 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM

For more information on the program or participating sites you may either access the website [footstepsinhistory.com](http://footstepsinhistory.com) or call Veronica Cadoppi at 401.724.2200. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH OR BARBARA DIXON.

## INTERPRETATION

### Rangers offer Walkabouts again in 2005

The Rangers and VIPs just wrapped up another successful summer of Walkabouts. This year a dozen of these free public programs were offered at sites all over the Valley, from a bike trip that showed off the new segment of the Bikeway, to a hike along the Blackstone Gorge and a stroll through downtown Woonsocket. One particular highlight of the season was when our beloved volunteer Margaret Carroll filled in for an ailing Ranger Arning and offered a last minute program about the Grand Trunk Railroad that drew 65 people to Millville. Be sure to check in next summer to see what corners of the Blackstone River Valley we will be walking about in 2006.

### Blackstone Valley Education Network to offer course for teachers

Eighteen partners from the Blackstone Valley Education Network are offering a new course entitled "Teaching the American Story through the Blackstone Valley" this fall. Participating teachers will explore and experience sites offering educational programs across the Valley. Each week, participants will visit a different site, learn about their educational offerings, participate in selected activities, and will discover how to incorporate them into their classroom.

This course will allow educators to learn about some of the educational opportunities available in the Blackstone River Valley. Blackstone Valley sites have wonderful primary resources that cannot be found anywhere else, and they give students the chance to be exposed to real history. These sessions also give educators the opportunity to teach outside the boundaries of a classroom or textbook.

The course begins on September 20 and runs through December 20. Doug Kimball of Massachusetts Audubon / Broad Meadow Brook organized this project with the assistance of a grant from the Heritage Corridor Commission.

## VOLUNTEERS IN PARKS PROGRAM (VIP)

The Annual VIP Picnic held at Spring Lake in partnership with the Paddle Club was once again a fun time had by all. The summer evening weather was perfect, the pot luck picnic was plentiful and over 80 folks attended the outing, some arriving by boat, others by land after taking the scenic detour of Burrillville. Volunteers were presented with VIP "Volunteer in Parks" certificates for their service to this years 2005 programs. The popular annual watermelon seed spitting contest was as colorful as always and winning the youth contest was Ben Thompson, Teen division Sarah Riendeau, Adult division Ralph Bianco and the Senior division Burt Novell. Finding a watermelon with seeds proved to be the toughest part of the event!!



2005 Champ of the watermelon seed spitting contest Ralph Bianco at 28.6'.

## Paddle Club News



Paddle Club goes with the flow to the very end of the season! We just completed our 5th Paddle Club season and the 16 week paddles were the most attended this year. Thanks to many for spreading the word about the club and to the Providence Journal

who highlighted the club in one of the summer series articles. Many now know how to safely access the Blackstone River and area tributaries. Our continued partnership with Great Canadian who provided the boats for the season were always on time and ready to launch.

The Rangers alone would not have been able handle the large crowds if it were not for our 17 dedicated VIP Paddle Club volunteers. Thanks to their paddling skills, patience and hospitality we enjoyed a very safe and successful season.

In celebration of our 5th season 11 VIP's who were the original Paddle Club volunteers were honored with their NPS 5 year service medal, the following dedicated volunteers are Julie & Steve Riendeau, Ben Thompson, Lisa DeHaan, Burt Nowell, Linda Konvalinka, Lee Parham, Bob Martin, Kent & Cheryl Cameron, and Diane Angell.

STAFF CONTACT – SUZANNE BUCHANAN.

## CHAMBER MOVES

The Blackstone Valley Chamber has a new home beginning September 19th. The Omara House, 37-39 Main Street, Millbury, MA 508.234.9090.

## STAFF NOTES

### Joanna Doherty Joins as New Community Planner

Joanna Doherty joined the Commission staff in May as Community Planner. Joanna arrived from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) where she was a Preservation Planner working with communities, state agencies, and other stakeholders. Joanna was also responsible for managing the Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program with DCR. Previously an Architectural Historian/Supervisor with Public Archeology Laboratory, she has been involved with preservation planning projects around New England. On arriving here, Joanna immediately jumped into assisting with Blackstone Expedition 2005 and has since been working on existing and new projects including the Canal Preservation Study, Hassanamessit Woods, Franklin Farm, Reuben Mason House, and the RI Preservation Grant Program. It is wonderful to have Joanna on board and add her expertise as a new component of the Commission staff.

## CALENDAR OF COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

September 24, 2005 - Greenway Challenge.

September 30, 2005 - Heritage Homecoming Events

October 3, 2005 - Heritage and Tourism Preserve America Welcome Reception - Asa Waters Mansion, Millbury, MA - 6:00 PM - RSVP to Veronica Cadoppi, Project Manager at 401.724.2200.

**October 4, 2005** - Heritage and Tourism Summit - Featuring Preserve America Staff, Heritage and Tourism Partners - Slater Mill - 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. For reservations please contact Veronica Cadoppi, Project Manager at 401.724.2200.

**October 8, 9 and 10, 2005** - Footsteps in History - Visit the offerings of over 130 sites

**November 2<sup>nd</sup> - Providence** CVB to have a mini summit at BRT  
Learn about offerings at special sites throughout the RI section of the Blackstone Valley - Connect Barbara Dixon.

**November 17** – Commission Meeting Massachusetts Site to Be Determined

**Chain of Lights** - First Weekend of December.